

Mississippi Department of Health (MDH) ***Emergency Preparedness Accomplishments***

To fulfill its mission to promote and protect the health of Mississippi residents, the Mississippi Department of Health has been working to improve Mississippi's emergency preparedness and response capabilities. Highlighted below are some of the programs, practices, and professionals that have been put in place to assist Mississippi residents in the event of a public health crisis.

Nearly 40 MDH centers are in place around the state to specifically deal with any terrorism related event. These centers include:

- Supplies of antidotes and medications for a potential surge of additional patients
- Standardized protective clothing for healthcare personnel to provide protection as they care for all affected patients
- Enhanced isolation capacity for every hospital in the event of an infectious disease outbreak
- Decontamination equipment
- Access to additional ambulances that will assist in triage and transportation of patients
- The installation and implementation of Visual DX and TheraDoc – the latest disease detection software – allowing Mississippi physicians to better detect and more rapidly treat any disease including bioterrorism agents

Emergency Response Coordinators (ERC's) are placed in each one of the nine public health districts and they work with local emergency management agencies and planning officials to prepare and execute emergency plans. The ERC's are:

- Equipped to respond 24/7 to any state emergency
- Trained to respond to chemical, biological, radioactive, nuclear and explosive events
- Members of the MDH teams working in the 40 centers around the state

Nurses trained in bioterrorism issues and diseases are working in every public health district. Their responsibilities include:

- Monitoring hospitals, clinics and other areas for indications of bioterrorism exposures and other infectious disease outbreaks
- Developing plans for large-scale distribution of medical materials and pharmaceuticals as necessary

A Health Alert Network (HAN) has been developed and put in place to ensure each community has timely access to developing public health related information and access to highly-trained professional personnel for effective public health preparedness, response and service on a 24/7 basis. Key components of the HAN include:

- A database of almost 13,000 physicians and other health care providers who can be contacted at any time
- The ability to alert key MDH employees within minutes in case of a crisis
- The resources to alert media across the state
- The ability to alert and inform stakeholder groups and special populations

A new Web site, featuring enhanced emergency preparedness and bioterrorism sections, and a 24/7-information hotline have been launched.

- The redesigned site features specific information on ways in which residents can stay informed and what they need to protect themselves during a public health crisis
- Information to help seniors, children, people with disabilities, and other special needs groups
- Specific guidelines on what the public should do in each threat level
- A 24/7 hotline has been established that :
 - is available in English, Spanish and Vietnamese
 - has the capacity to immediately inform residents of a breaking news story
 - can add additional lines and operators to respond to incoming calls in the event of a public health crisis or emergency
 - relays health and programmatic information beyond traditional working hours